

Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement regarding the 90 day report issued by the U.S. Department of Energy's Subcommittee on Natural Gas. Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, is a leader in the effort to protect drinking water and the environment from the risks of hydraulic fracturing. The congressman is a coauthor of the FRAC Act, which would mandate public disclosure of chemicals used in frack fluid and allow the EPA to regulate fracking activities under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The congressman also authored the legislation that led to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study on hydraulic fracturing that is currently underway.

"I continue to have significant concerns that six of the seven members on the Natural Gas Subcommittee of the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board have financial ties to the natural gas industry, which inherently creates a conflict of interest. Nevertheless, the fact that this same subcommittee found a wide array of improvements that should be made by the natural gas industry and government agencies underscores the fact that we as a nation are not adequately prepared yet to protect the public and environment from an unprecedented level of drilling across the country.

"Given that this panel acknowledges the need for stronger environmental and public health protections, I cannot help but feel that these findings further highlight the need to reverse the current exemption that explicitly prohibits the EPA from overseeing hydraulic fracturing under the Safe Drinking Water Act. With widely reported problems at drilling sites across the country, along with this DOE subcommittee's concerns, there is no reason that the federal agency charged with protecting the environment should be barred from doing its job when it comes to natural gas drilling and drinking water supplies. This exemption was put in place at the behest of the natural gas industry and it must be reversed. If hydraulic fracturing is as safe as the natural gas industry claims it is, then the industry should have no problem with EPA oversight, but the industry's reluctance to such oversight only raises further questions.

"The FRAC Act, of which I'm a coauthor, would reverse the Safe Drinking Water Act exemption and also require natural gas companies to disclose all of the chemicals they are pumping into the ground during the hydraulic fracturing process. I'm pleased that the Natural Gas Subcommittee agrees with the need for chemical disclosure. We must have federal policies in place that mandate this disclosure rather than relying on the industry to voluntarily do so itself.

"I also believe that we should be very careful to not have this Department of Energy panel

supersede the important and ongoing EPA study on hydraulic fracturing, which I initiated through legislation in Congress. While it is certainly important to have the Energy Department involved, it is equally important to have the EPA conduct a comprehensive study. I urge a prudent course of action that is based on actual science rather than corporate natural gas industry influence."